Psychological pedagogy paradigm in Romanian interwar history of pedagogical thinking

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Abstract

Romanian pedagogy in the interwar period is represented by the prominent figures who contributed to the affirmation of the value of education models paradigms: the paradigm of philosophical pedagogy, sociological pedagogy paradigm and psychological pedagogy paradigm. The three paradigms propose our vision on, training and education. Psychological pedagogy paradigm was affirmed by research on children's individuality, individualization of learning, methods for understanding of students. Relevant research conducted by the Institute of Experimental Psychology, Comparative and Applied, founded by Florian Stefanescu, Goangă (1922), and Laboratory of Experimental Pedagogy, founded by Vladimir Ghidionescu (1925). Psychological pedagogy developed in the academic Cluj is characterized by some specific notes: spirit of scholarly, thorough documentation, original publication, dissemination outstanding achievements in pedagogy, introducing a spirit of scientific research and publications, organizational initiatives meritorious.

Introduction

Pedagogy as educational science resorts to the new psychology, the experimental psychology, to the substantiation of the true scientific knowledge. A knowledge built at the level of experimental pedagogy, invoked and promoted in education and instruction. This approach was not only useful, but also necessary, in the conditions of a society in full process of industrialization. Society feels more and more the need to have people trained well with cognitive and practical abilities, capable of innovating and answering creatively to the new economic and social demands.

Experimental pedagogy, born from experimental psychology and influenced a long time by it, almost half century, with its most exaggerated form, pedology, was what physiology was for psychology: a discipline in which the experiment imposed to be used in the research of educational phenomena, precisely to ground scientifically this discipline. Through the beginning realizations of the Romanian experimental pedagogy, we remind the substitution of the mutual, Lancastrian method, with a mixed one, mutual-simultaneous (V. A. Urechia); teaching an object at small classes, research taken back in the 20th century; the organization of a new type of school, The “Urechia” Institute, a school conceived as the one initiated by Cecile Reddie or Edmond Demollins; the reformation of the rural education by trying some model rural schools, like the Swiss ones.

Under the influence of the “New Education”, much more known in the first decades of the 20th century and much more accessible methodologically speaking to the teaching
staff from Romania, the ideas put in circulation by the pedagogical experimental orientation, centered on the knowledge of the child, are beginning to get shape, especially through Vladimir Ghidionescu. The advocate of experimental pedagogy, formed in the E. Meumann’s laboratory, Vladimir Ghidionescu, through his university lectures and conferences, achieves a real movement of spreading new ideas, insisting on the problems that need to be experimented and adapted to the educational practice of the time.

**Methodology**

The present study is intended to be a scientific essay, based on the method of historical analysis. Based on historical documents, we identified in the 3rd and 4th decades of the 20th century the maturation of the Romanian experimental pedagogy. We assist, now, at a real movement of ideas and organized experiments, either from a personal initiative or especially from an official initiative, which demonstrates the beginning of the constitution of a real trend of the experimental pedagogy in Romania.

**Results**

From the analysis of historical documents (laws of education, educational programs, scientific studies, etc.), we found that Romanian pedagogy in the interwar period is represented by the prominent figures who contributed to the affirmation of the value of education models paradigms: **philosophical pedagogy paradigm**, **sociological pedagogy paradigm** and **psychological pedagogy paradigm**. Paradigms promoted in the interwar Romanian pedagogy are presented in the literature as "doctrine" that contributed to the field of historical progress in the thinking and educational practice.

The three paradigms propose our vision on training and education. We analyzed, in particular, the third paradigm: psychological pedagogy paradigm.

**Philosophical pedagogy paradigm** conceives education and training on the basis of principles and general rules. It is represented by G. G. Antonescu, St. Barsanescu, C. Narly.

**Sociological pedagogy paradigm** is represented by Dimitrie Gusti, Petre Andrei, Ion C. Petrescu and Stanciu Stoian. Sociological pedagogy studies the phenomenon of education in its direct interrelations with the social environment.

**Psychological pedagogy paradigm** stated mainly the University of Cluj. Relevant research conducted by the **Institute of Experimental Psychology, Comparative and Applied**, founded by Florian Ştefănescu, Goangă (1922), and **Laboratory of Experimental Pedagogy**, founded by Vladimir Ghidionescu (1925). They conducted research on children's individuality, individualization of learning, methods for understanding students' psycho-pedagogical sheet composition.

Developed in experimental pedagogy, psychological pedagogy is particularly noticeable in the academic field of Cluj. It is distinguished by several characteristic notes: spirit of scholarly, thorough documentation, original publication, dissemination outstanding achievements in pedagogy, introducing a spirit of scientific research and publications, organizational initiatives meritorious. Psychological pedagogy, based on research of child’s psychology, continues the pre-war direction of investigation of the child’s psychic life.

Florian Ştefănescu-Goangă (1881-1958) is the first professor of the Department of Psychology at the University of Cluj. He established experimental psychology in Romania. Around his department was formed first school of psychology in Romania with Liviu Rusu, Nicolae Mărgineanu, Mihai Beniuc, Dimitrie Todoran and many others. He founded and led "Journal of Psychology" published in Cluj, between 1938 and 1939. In 1922, he made a practical course entitled "Introduction to experimental psychology (experimental explanation and demonstration equipment)". He considered experimental and statistical methods are more efficient in psychological research. In 1916, the American psychologist Terman adapted the American population Binet-Simon psychological tests as the Stanford-Binet test. In 1937, this test was again revised and used in the U.S. as "Terman-Merrill Scale". Fl. Ştefănescu-Goangă reviewed, completed and adapted in 1940 this version of the test for the Romanian population. He published the following papers: "Selections and Guidance Capabilities" (1929), "Emotional Instability" (1936), "Social Adaptation" (1938), "Education and upper gifted children" (1939); "Measuring intelligence" (1940) in advocating for educational differentiation. Among the applications of psychology, the Professor from Cluj also considers school. He proposes the establishment of special schools or classes for gifted children based on the use of psychological tests as methods of investigating intelligence.

Author of experimental orientation in Cluj psychology, Professor Florian Ştefănescu-Goangă exerted a positive influence on scientific pedagogy, by promoting a psychological pedagogy in Romania. It is thus considered that education, as a determinant factor in the process of human personality formation and development, makes a special contribution to the valorisation of hereditary dignity and the assertion of skills and talents.

In the conception of the psychological school in Cluj, the nature and type of spiritual conduct depend on two categories of factors: "native equipment" and "learning", considering that, through exercise and under the influence of a determinant environment, native provisions are updated, developed and are organized (A. Rosca, M. Bejat, 1976, p. 99).

So, Florian Ştefănescu-Goangă is campaigning for an active, highly educative education aimed at developing intellectual abilities, with a special emphasis on stimulating creativity and independence of thinking. This idea is not only very valuable but also extremely present. Fl.
Ștefănescu-Goangă has the merit of having created a school in Cluj experimental psychological research-oriented educational problems that arise and evolve in a specific national context in terms of educational and social.

Vladimir Ghidionescu (1878-1948) was Professor of Pedagogy at the University of Cluj (1919-1944) and director of the Pedagogical Seminar within the University of Cluj (1922-1939). In 1925 established a Laboratory of Experimental Pedagogy Pedology and a double function: education and research. It was intended to support the work of theoretical and practical training of future teachers. Print scientific disciplines pedagogic character and a modern touch, located as close to the level achieved in other European universities.

Vladimir Ghidionescu adopt a balanced attitude about the role of experiment and experimental pedagogy in the scientific pedagogy. In the paper "Introduction to pedology and experimental pedagogy" (1915), Ghidionescu admits the philosophical and social source of education and the necessary contributions of child psychology. In collaboration with Gheorghe Comicescu, he published "Experiments for calibration tests of intelligence for Romanian children" (1928), which advocates a scientific pedagogy based on experimental research on children. During his studies at the University of Cluj, Vladimir Ghidionescu also published the following works: "The Hygiene of the Student" (1924), "New Ideas and Methods in the Education of Children from 3 to 7 Years" (1933), "Teacher Training secondary" (1935).

Stefan Bârsănescu stated in paper "Unit of Contemporary Pedagogy as a Science": "... the most important contribution to the emergence and development of experimental pedagogy in Romania is due to Vladimir Ghidionescu ..." (Bârsănescu, 1976, p. 54). The presence of a spirit of erudition, a thorough documentation, original publications, the popularization of remarkable achievements in the field of pedagogy, the introduction of a scientific spirit in research and publications, meritorious organizational initiatives, were the characteristics of the pedagogy of Cluj, whose representative was Vladimir Ghidionescu.

Petre Ilcuș (1893-1983) was formed in the Pedology and Experimental Pedagogy Laboratory of the University of Cluj. He is the author of the paper "Child Intelligence" (1925). It is the first study conducted within the Laboratory. The "preface" of the work is signed by Vladimir Ghidionescu. The paper includes psycho-pedagogical experiments centered on determining the intelligence of 6-7 year old children. It was intended to organize a differentiated education, depending on the skills and intellectual resources.

The author states that the experimental analysis of the child's intelligence has important economic and social repercussions. But not only because it tends, on the one hand, to achieve the real "skill school, especially in view of expanding this research in the field of secondary education"; and on the other hand it pursues "the selection of values and their placement in those areas of practical and social activity for which they actually correspond" (Ilcuș, 1925, p. 191).

Gheorghe Comicescu (1892-1972), collaborator of Vladimir Ghidionescu, is distinguished by the paper "The Relation between Intelligence and Abstraction in Education" (1929), in which he advocates the organization of student-centered education and psychological peculiarities. At the recommendation of his professor, Gheorghe Comicescu was a scholar of the International Institute of Columbia University (1932-1933), publishing the volume "Achievements and Trends in Contemporary American School" (1935).

The paper "The Relation between Intelligence and Abstraction in Education" establishes, on the basis of personal experiments, the "specific nature of abstraction at different ages", showing its differences according to gender, specific circumstances and types of intellect. "The results, as shown by Vladimir Ghidionescu in the Preface of this paper, to show us that the purpose of education must aim at a true mental development through education" (1929, p. IV).

At a time when intuitive education had gone a long way from theory to pedagogical practice, where many educators had transformed intuition into purpose, overestimating the role of concrete, keeping small pupils at an empirical level for a long time, Gheorghe Comicescu aims to demonstrate that education acquires educational virtues to the extent that it helps the student to overcome the plan of the concrete and to move into the abstract plan of knowledge. For this purpose, the author proposes to return to the "psychological" stages of Herbart, as they would be in accordance with the natural child development laws. (...) Comicescu criticized the abuse of "unorganized intuition" (Comicescu, 1929, p. 9). The way in the instructive-educational process must be from intuitive to abstract. Gheorghe Comicescu considers promoting the process of abstraction in education as a "didactic necessity" (Idem, p. 167).

In the spirit promoted by most experimental pedagogues, Comicescu looks that pedagogy science would result from its proximity to biology. The paper "Biological origin in the science of education" was published in 1931.

In 1943, Gheorghe Comicescu published the paper "The Problem of the Whole in Psychology in its Relations with Education", in which it deals with the existing relations between prehistoric, associationist, behaviorist, configurationist, biological, vitalist, humanist, spiritualist, structuralist psychology on the one hand and pedagogy on the other hand. In this context, the author pays particular attention to the curricula, viewed from the perspective of these psychological thinking positions. Thus, Gheorghe Comicescu distinguishes two kinds of school programs: knowledge-based programs and programs centered on the child.

The experimental researches undertaken by Gh. Comicescu are the most elaborate. This opens up a new perspective on education and training: the experimental
one, capable of giving scientific credibility to the results of various psychological and pedagogical investigations.


Dimitrie Todoran continues the work of the pedagogue Vladimir Ghidonescu, appreciating the role of the pedagogical experiment. He has promoted a modern conception of human evolution. He considered that pedagogy is a normative science, with the role of modeling of human nature under the empire of values.

With arguments in the theory of learning that he promotes based on the experimental study, Dimitrie Todoran proposes to replace the name of pedagogy with the science of education, taking on expression often promoted by John Dewey.

In the "Psychology of Education" (1942), which later became "Individuality and Education" (1974), D. Todoran analyzes the foundations of pedagogy assertion as "science of education": individuality and learning. It formulates a new theory on learning: the gradient-dynamic theory. It is a writing which exploited the most prestigious experimental researches in this field made in the world until 1940. Mentioning, in the spirit of the psychological school in Cluj, that the foundation of education is "biological" and "sociological" (I. Gh. Stanciu, 1995, p. 200).

The gradient-dynamic theory has led to the idea of a heuristic education, made by its own problem solving effort, in different didactic and extradidactic contexts. The provision to learn occurs as a result of an imbalance in the relationship between the organism and the environment - the educational field. There is a need for restoring balance, finding new tools for adaptation, learning. The provision of learning becomes the center or gradient around which the intellectual processes are organized dynamically in order to achieve the goal: acquiring knowledge, skills, skills, etc. Through his demonstration, D. Todoran affirms and emphasizes the role of motivation in learning. The motivation for learning is determined by creating a complex, stimulating educational environment for students and teachers. The study of learning also implies "the unity of the person with the environment"; requires an understanding of the whole learning situation as well as the development of that person.

With a thorough scientific training, Dimitrie Todoran placed pedagogy at the meeting with psychology, axiology, philosophy, thus expanding his domain and emphasizing his interdisciplinary character.

Conclusions

- The Romanian pedagogical thought between the two world wars was quite conducive to the promotion of experimentalism.
- Beyond the barriers they had to face, the Romanian pedagogy gave rise to an open mind for research in the didactic profession. It has stimulated the emergence and development of a critical spirit, capable of recognizing scientific truth.
- The models promoted by the three paradigms of interwar Romanian pedagogy presented in our study influenced the education system and its components considered global.
- The initiation and implementation of educational reforms contributed to their modernization.
- At the same time, they positively influenced educators’ thinking, their ability to act individually and socially based on complex investigations focused on different dimensions of educational phenomenon.

References:


